

I oppose loosening the rules designed to promote and protect diversity of media ownership. These rules were adopted to ensure that the public would receive a diverse range of viewpoints from the media, and not simply the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates.

Locally owned media are much more likely to provide coverage of local issues of vital interest to consumers and citizens. We have seen this in both broadcast media and with our remaining major newspaper, the Chronicle, here in San Francisco. With less local management, it has become more difficult to find information about or results of local elections, for example. Balanced coverage of local, as well as regional and national, issues is vital for citizens to make informed choices that preserve the democratic process on which our nation is based. Huge numbers of people form their political views and opinions on the basis of television (and to a lesser extent radio) programming, news and editorial opinions. Without access to coverage of local issues, many members of the public see no point in voting, and thus, citizens are discouraged from voting. This may well be the aim of corporate interests, but is deadly to the continuation of this society.

Further, by reducing the diversity of media ownership, viewpoints not shared by a particular media monopoly are silenced, further weakening our democracy. It is clear that large media companies filter news programming to promote their own interests in flagrant disregard of the public good.

While the proliferation of internet communication and news benefits some citizens wealthy enough to have easy access to the internet, to suggest as Michael Powell has done, that internet an "explosion" in alternate news/communication outlets has provided sufficient outlets for diverse opinions and news coverage is patently ridiculous. Millions of Americans do not have internet access. They may be uncomfortable with this technology or they may not be able to afford it, as they may not be able to afford cable television access. Many of us do not want to be burdened with the proliferation of offensive television programming available via cable television. But most telling, is the economic division among citizens able to access alternative outlets. To ignore the right of these millions of citizens to access a diverse multiplicity of opinions and in-depth local news coverage would be irresponsible and unethical.

For these reasons, it is imperative that the remaining vestiges of public protections of media diversity and ownership be protected and strengthened. Media monopolies are antithetical to a democratic society that can only be maintained through a free press. Media monopolies spell the death of a free press, and are just as dangerous to our nation as any foreign terrorist.